

the cardinal doctrine of the "Vindicise" is the contract as the basis of the State. Languet's is, in fact, the first modern attempt to elaborate the doctrine, though the idea itself had been mooted by some of the mediaeval writers on politics. He emphasises, too, the right of the States-General, as representing the people, to punish its violation by the prince, and on this point equal stress is laid in the Abjuration. The political creed professed by the States-General of the Netherlands is, therefore, neither new nor original. Languet's work was the elaboration of a theory of the sovereignty of the people as represented by the States-General. It was a theoretic attempt to justify the resistance of the Huguenots to a persecuting king. It showed from Scripture, history, reason, that kings who break the contract justly forfeit the allegiance of their subjects. The Act of Abjuration is the explicit exemplification of this theory. It deposes an actual sovereign, releases a whole people from its allegiance, renounces the tyrant who has broken his pledged faith. In so doing the States-General assume the *role* of the mediaeval pope, in defence of whose pretensions the schoolmen had sought to vindicate the rights of peoples. But, unlike the pope, they do not appeal to Heaven for the warrant to do so. They appeal to history, to natural law, to actual wrongs, for their warrant. It is enough for them that Philip has broken the contract, has been unfaithful to his oath, has violated ancient charters, has disowned constitutional privileges and liberties. True, they recognise sovereignty by divine ordinance, but they do not admit that God is necessarily on the side of the tyrant against the people. Government, even though divinely instituted, exists for the benefit of the governed. It is ordained by God for their sake, not for the sake of the ruler, and therefore even a divine title has no right as against broken faith, violated charters. They recognise only a conditional sovereignty in the ruler, and they claim the right to transfer, in certain circumstances, their allegiance to another.

In forswearing Philip, they do not, however, formally proclaim the sovereignty of the people. They are not republican on principle, though the republican principle had received momentum from the impact of liberty with tyranny. They do not, formally, found a republic. "As to govern-